MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN
AUG. '96 18
ONSLAUGHT PHASE 1
X-MAN
ONSLAUGHT AND BEYOND! UPDATE INSIDE!
SAFETY IN NUMBERS!
GUEST STARRING X-FORCE!
DIRECT EDITION
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"PEACE ON EARTH IS AN ILLUSION.
"A MIRAGE AT THE END OF A JOURNEY *WITHOUT* END. IT IS A PROMISE UNKEPT.
"THE SEEMING SERENITY OF ALL THE SANDS OF TIME —
"THE VAST UNBROKEN DESERT FROM YESTERDAY TO TOMORROW...
"... DISGUISES THE TRUE NATURE OF THE ROILING TURBULENCE BENEATH, THE NEVER-ENDING CONFLICT OF *LIFE* — IN ALL ITS WONDROUSLY VARIED FORMS —
"... AND *DEATH.*
"A STRUGGLE THAT MUST CONCERN ME ONCE MORE...
"... IF MY FEARS ARE JUSTIFIED — IF *HIS SARCOPHAGUS* IS INDEED —"

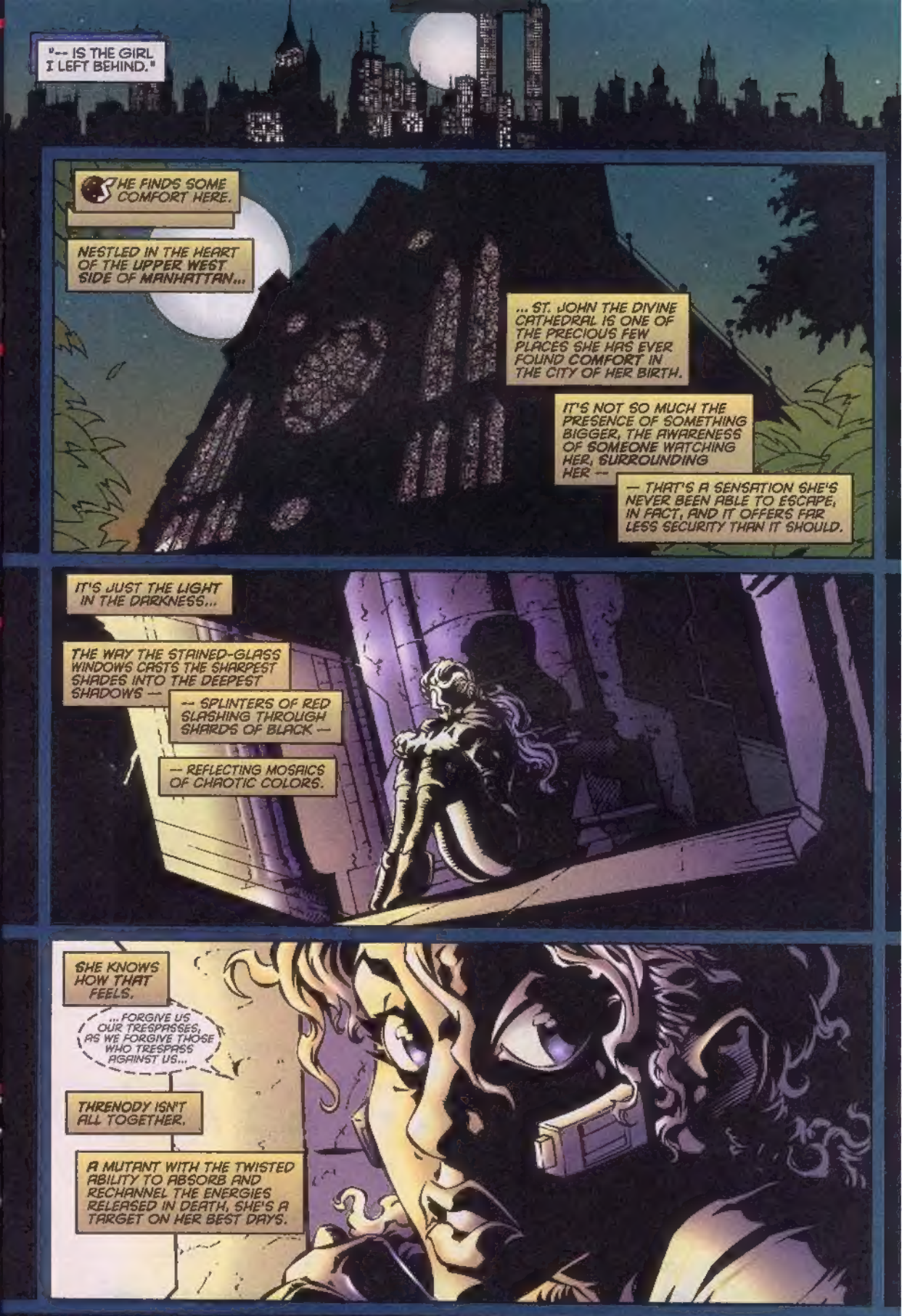
X-MAN™ Vol. 1, No. 18, August, 1996. (ISSN #1086-7724) Published by MARVEL COMICS, Gerard Calabrese, President, Stan Lee, Publisher. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. **SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.** Published monthly. Copyright © 1996 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $1.95 per copy in the U.S. and $2.75 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: U.S. $23.40; foreign $35.40; and Canadian subscribers must add $10.00 for postage and GST. GST #R127032852. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. X-MAN (including all prominent characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) is a trademark of MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. **POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO X-MAN, c/o MARVEL DIRECT MARKETING CORP./SUBSCRIPTION DEPT. P.O. BOX 1979 DANBURY, CT. 06813-1979. TELEPHONE # (203) 743-5331. Printed in Canada.**

Terry KAVANAGH — Writer
Steve SKROCE — Penciller
Bud LaROSA and Rob HUNTER — Inkers
Richard STARKINGS & COMICRAFT — Letters
Mike THOMAS — Colors
MALIBU — Enhancement
Joye GARDNER — Editor
Bob HARRAS — Editor in Chief

"... ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE."
THE XAVIER INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER LEARNING, ONCE SANCTUARY AND SHELTER FOR THE MISFITS OF HUMANITY --
REFUGE AND RETREAT FOR THE RARE FEW MUTANTS AMONG US --
-- IS NOW A FOXHOLE.
AND NATE GREY -- QUITE POSSIBLY THE MOST POWERFUL MUTANT MIND KNOWN TO MAN --
-- IS ALONE...
... IN A CROWD.
X FORCE
KNOWS THE DRILL.
AN UNDERGROUND STRIKE-FORCE WITHOUT PEER, THEY KNOW THEY'VE GOT THE MEANS AND MOVES.
DONUS
THEY KNOW THE MISSION -- KEEP YOUNG NATE ALIVE, AT ALL COSTS, AND OUT OF THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY --
-- BUT THEY DON'T KNOW THE ENEMY.
YET.
ONSLAUGHT.
RECOMMENDATIONS, PEOPLE..?
SUGGESTED STRATEGIES, POSSIBLE WEAK LINKS IN HIS --
NONE, DOMINO, LET'S GET REAL HERE --
-- AN' STOP BEATIN' AROUND THE THORN-BUSH...

THERESA ROURKE--
-- CALLED SIRYN, FOR HER ABILITY TO USE SOUND AS A WEAPON, SHE IS ONE OF THE FIRST OF A NEW BREED OF SECOND-GENERATION MUTANTS.
... THAT'S XAVIER.
PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER HIMSELF, FOUNDIN' FATHER OF ALL WHO WEAR THE X...
... DEFEATIN' THE X-MEN.
UP ON THE SCREEN. BIGGER 'N LIFE.
OUT THERE SOMEWHERE.
XAVIER... ONSLAUGHT... THE NUTTY PROFESSOR... ALL COMES DOWN TO THE SAME AGAIN, RED.
US AGAINST THEM.
AS USUAL.
TABITHA SMITH, MELTDOWN, IS CURRENTLY THE HOTHEAD OF THE GROUP.
INCREDIBLE.
THE TAPE-LOOPS OF XAVIER'S BETRAYAL HAVE BEEN LOCKED DIRECTLY INTO THE MONITOR CIRCUITS...
... BUT THE HARDWARE ITSELF REMAINS UNTOUCHED.
HE'S LAUGHING AT US.
ROBERTO DaCOSTA -- A.K.A. SUNSPOT -- IS A SOLAR FUSE, BURNING EVER CLOSER TO THE SOURCE.
WE KNOW WHO ONSLAUGHT IS NOW, TEAM -- NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT ANYMORE --
"-- BUT WE STILL DON'T KNOW QUITE WHAT HE IS."
SUCH CASUAL CAMARADERIE AND FAMILIAR EASE, THE STRENGTH IN THEIR NUMBERS...
ANOTHER TIME -- ANOTHER WORLD --
-- THIS COULD HAVE BEEN A HAVEN FOR ME.
MAYBE EVEN A... HOME.
BUT THE BIG ONE, CALIBAN --
"-- AND DOMINO..."
NATE..?

THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYES, KID -- LIKE YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, BUT HAVE NO INTENTION OF SAYING IT --
-- I'D RECOGNIZE IT A MILE AWAY...
I KNEW A WOMAN LIKE YOU ONCE.
SHE WAS A COLD-BLOODED ASSASSIN...
...A HEARTLESS MERCENARY.
AND..?
SHE BUTCHERED MY FRIENDS IN COLD BLOOD, RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES.
LOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT, TOO.
=OUCH=
AND YOU ALSO KNOW THAT WASN'T ME.
SUPPOSE I DO.
HARDLY MATTERS ANYWAY.
THIS IS WAR. THE LAST WAR, FROM ALL APPEARANCES.
WAR IS WHAT I DO BEST, DOMINO, ALWAYS HAS BEEN.
UNTIL I FOUND THIS WORLD, AT LEAST.
THIS BATTLEGROUND IS STILL SO STRANGE TO ME. AND YOUR X-FORCE SEEMS SO BALANCED -- SO COMPLETE ALREADY --
-- I AM OF LITTLE OR NO USE TO THEM.
EVERYBODY WANTS ME ALL OF A SUDDEN, NOW MORE THAN EVER.
BUT THE ONLY PERSON WHO NEEDS ME -- WHO EVER REALLY NEEDED ME --


"-- IS THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND."
HE FINDS SOME COMFORT HERE.
NESTLED IN THE HEART OF THE UPPER WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN...
... ST. JOHN THE DIVINE CATHEDRAL IS ONE OF THE PRECIOUS FEW PLACES SHE HAS EVER FOUND COMFORT IN THE CITY OF HER BIRTH.
IT'S NOT SO MUCH THE PRESENCE OF SOMETHING BIGGER, THE AWARENESS OF SOMEONE WATCHING HER, SURROUNDING HER --
-- THAT'S A SENSATION SHE'S NEVER BEEN ABLE TO ESCAPE, IN FACT, AND IT OFFERS FAR LESS SECURITY THAN IT SHOULD.
IT'S JUST THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS...
THE WAY THE STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS CASTS THE SHARPEST SHADES INTO THE DEEPEST SHADOWS --
-- SPLINTERS OF RED SLASHING THROUGH SHARDS OF BLACK --
-- REFLECTING MOSAICS OF CHAOTIC COLORS.
SHE KNOWS HOW THAT FEELS.
... FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US...
THRENODY ISN'T ALL TOGETHER.
A MUTANT WITH THE TWISTED ABILITY TO ABSORB AND RECHANNEL THE ENERGIES RELEASED IN DEATH, SHE'S A TARGET ON HER BEST DAYS.

TONIGHT -- WITH THE NEW CONFUSION IN HER HEART FEEDING THE OLD CACOPHONY IN HER HEAD --
-- SHE'S AN EASY TARGET FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TRESPASSED AGAINST HER.
ARCLIGHT...
...HARPOON...
...SCALP-HUNTER...
...AND DELIVER US FROM EVIL...
AMEN.
SKRAK

MARAUDERS... A CLONED AND RE-CLONED VILLAINOUS SQUAD OF MUTANTS.
NO
RUN, LITTLE MOUSE, RUN --
CHT CHT CHT
... AND VERTIGO.
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
-- BUT THERE'S NOWHERE LEFT TO HIDE!
UHNN...
THE TIMES THEY ARE A' CHANGIN', THRENODY...
... AND A TOUCH OF VERTIGO CAN STILL BE QUITE DISCONCERTING, I SEE.
WOULDN'T... THINK SO... SCALP...
... IF YOU WALKED A MILE IN MY HEELS.
BUDDA BUDDA
-ULK-
-ULK-
-ULK-

NOW TO FIGURE A WAY OUT OF THIS AMBUSH WITHOUT GETTING MYSELF KILLED.
WORST MISTAKE YOU EVER MADE, GIRL --
--WAS LEAVING YOUR LITTLE "X-MAN" BEHIND.
UNFF...
YOU HAD T'VE KNOWN HE WOULDN'T APPROVE OF THAT.
HAVE TO TRY AND CUSHION THE IMPACT AGAINST --
-- VERTIGO..?
STILL BREATHING..?!
SCALPHUNTER'S USING STUN PELLETS. THEN THE MARAUDERS AREN'T OUT TO KILL ME!
ALL I NEED T'DO IS CIPHER OFF SOME OF THAT PAIN SHE'S FEELING, LIKE I DID TO THAT GUY IN GREECE...
"... AND RELEASE THE ENERGY BACK AT THESE TWO-BIT CLONES."
YEAAAR!
SEE X-MEN #45 FOR ALL THE DEADLY DETAILS - Joe

HA! BET THEY WEREN'T EXPECTING THAT!
AN' I KNOCKED THEM OUT, FOR NOW, AT LEAST --
-- WHICH WILL GIVE ME THE CHANCE TO MAKE GOOD MY ESCAPE.
THE 'RAUDERS OBVIOUSLY WANTED ME ALIVE FOR ...
WELCOME BACK, CHILD.
...SINISTER!
WELCOME HOME.
COME TO ME, MY DEAR.
THERE IS MUCH TO DISCUSS BETWEEN YOU AND ME.
YOU HAVE PLAYED YOUR ROLE OF DAMSEL IN DISTRESS ALL TOO WELL, PRETTY DEATHSONG.
THUS FAR.
BUT IT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING. THE BOY HAS YET TO COMPLETELY TRUST YOU.
READY OR NOT --
-- AND I DOUBT VERY, VERY MUCH THAT HE IS --

"-- THE SEED OF SUMMERS MUST BE HARVESTED..."
THIRTY MINUTES LATER...
DID WHAT I COULD WITH WHAT I HAD...
FINALLY MANAGED TO
DEFENSE DRONES STARTED DROPPING
AGAIN
HOLD UP, GREY.
DON'T DO ANYTHING WE'LL ALL --
MY SURFACE PSI-SCAN OF THE ESTATE'S BEING BLOCKED.
SOMEONE -- SOMETHING -- IS OUT THERE.
COMING CLOSER.
AS SOON AS I PUNCH THROUGH THE INTER-FERENCE --
NO, NATE, IF IT IS INDEED ONSLAUGHT --
-- EXPOSING YOURSELF SO DIRECTLY TO HIM WOULD BE WAY TOO DANGEROUS.

ROURKE, TAKE CAL OUT TO SCOUT THE GROUNDS.
STAY HIGH AND FAST, DO NOT ENGAGE -- NO MATTER WHO OR WHAT YOU FIND --
-- AND REJOIN THE REST OF US DOWN IN THE ARMORY.
'STAR...
HOW'RE YOU HOLDING UP?
THE YOUNG MUTANT NAMED SHATTERSTAR, A ONCE-PROUD REBEL WARRIOR FROM A WORLD THAT IS TRULY A STAGE --
-- BORN AND BRED TO BATTLE FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT OF OTHERS --
-- RECENTLY CAUGHT A SHOCKING GLIMPSE BEHIND THE CURTAIN.
AND IT SEEMS HE MAY NOT BE HALF THE MAN HE USED TO BE.
NOW'S NOT THE TIME, TABITHA.
I WILL NOT RETREAT, SIRYN.
IF THIS THREAT DOES, INDEED, PROVE TO BE --
A TRAP, WE KNOW.
AND YOU'RE THE QUARRY.
THE ONE WHOSE POWERS COULD -- AND PROBABLY, WOULD --
-- MAKE YE THE DEATH OF US ALL IN THE HANDS OF ONSLAUGHT...
... OR THE LAST T'STAND AGAINST HIM.
YE CANNAE COME, NATE.
BUT THE WAY I HEAR IT FROM MOIRA MacTAGGERT -- SEE IT IN YER FACE --

-- YE KNOW ALL ABOUT THE NATURE OF SACRIFICE ALREADY...
I DO INDEED.
RARE REMAINDER AND REMINDER OF A SUBTERRANEAN SOCIETY OF MUTANT MORLOCKS, EX-HORSEMAN OF APOCALYPSE HIMSELF. .
... THE SEEMINGLY-SIMPLE TRACKER KNOWN AS CALIBAN HAS NEVER BEEN A STRANGER TO THE HUNT.
CALIBAN SENSES NO ONE AHEAD, FRIEND-THERESA.
NO OTHER MUTANT PRESENCE OR...
...OR...
WAIT... CALIBAN DOES DETECT --
CURIOUS...
Uhmm..
A TUNNEL-DWELLER WHO SURVIVED MY MARAUDERS' ATTACKS -- THEIR PURGE OF THE CROP WHO REEKED OF MY WORK, ALL THOSE YEARS AGO --
-- REBORN IN THE IMAGE OF EN SABAH NUR.
THIS CREATURE AND I WOULD HAVE MUCH TO EXPLORE TOGETHER...

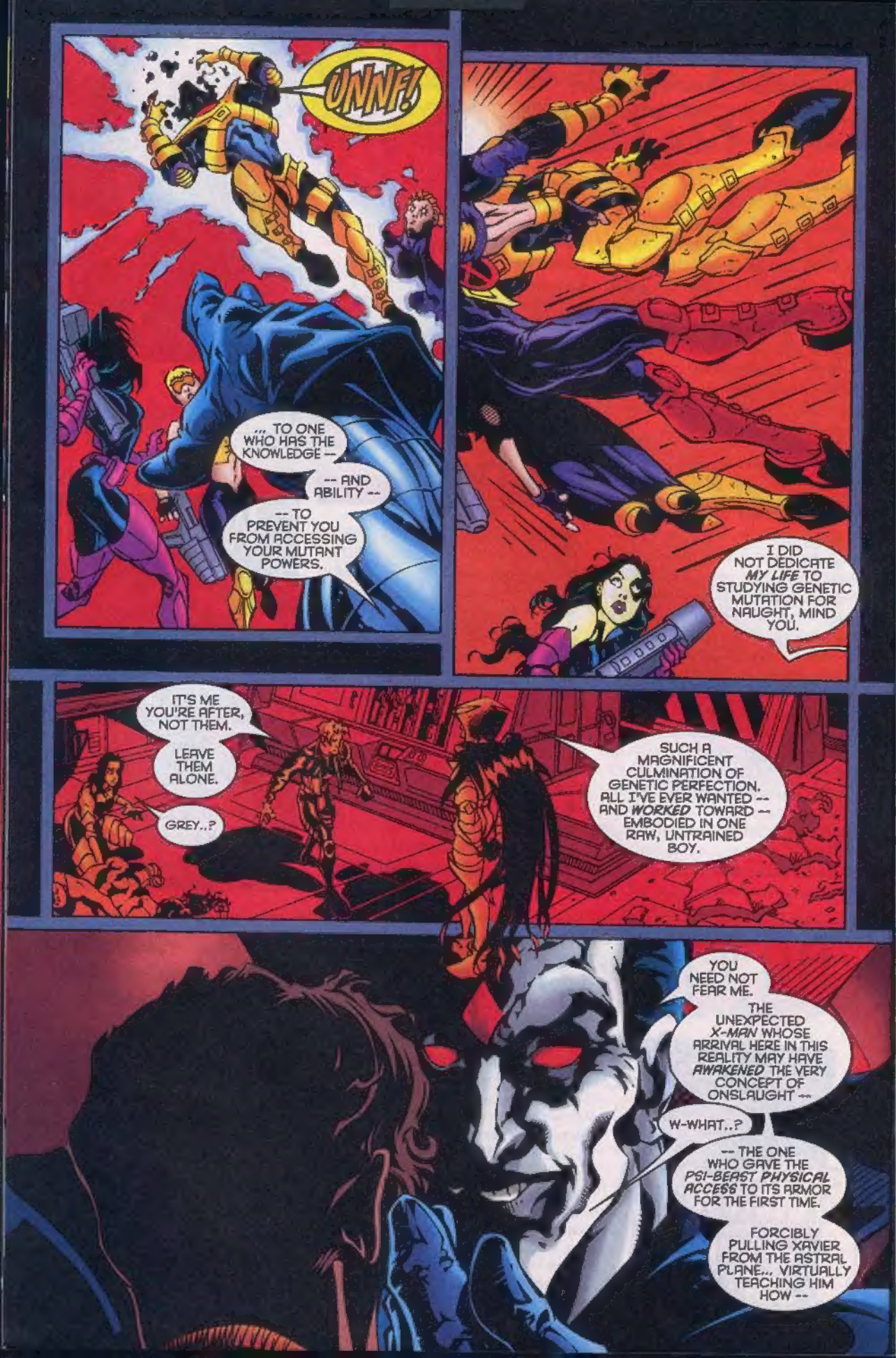
"... IF TIME ALLOWED"
LAST STAND, BOYS AND GIRLS.
A TELEPATH OF ONSLAUGHT'S STATURE ALREADY KNOWS ALL THERE IS ABOUT OUR INDIVIDUAL POWERS, OUR TRIED-AND-TRUE COMBAT MANEUVERS...
... SO EVERYTHING GOES NOW.
WE MUST RELY ON CABLE'S MUNITIONS VAULT.
CHOOSE YOUR WEAPONS CAREFULLY, TEAM. CHECK AND RECHECK EVERYTHING.
TWICE.
GREY, FLASH MY THOUGHTS FOR ALL YOU NEED TO LEARN ABOUT --
DONE.
STILL CAN'T GET USED TO THAT.
CABLE'S SO BUTTONED-UP AND THINK BEFORE YOU ACT -- SO WARY OF WASTING HIS TELEKINESIS --
AND I'M JUST A KID WITH WAY TOO MUCH POWER ON HIS HANDS.
NOT QUITE CABLE
NOBODY'S SAYING THAT, BELIEVE ME.
BUT YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY -- WE, ALL OF US -- HAVE COME TO FEEL ABOUT THE MAN...
I'M BEGINNING TO...

... CABLE RISKED HIS LIFE -- HIS VERY SANITY --
-- TO SAVE ME A FEW WEEKS AG --
DEAD OR ALIVE
TRUTH.
I, TOO, OWE A GREAT DEBT TO NATHAN CHRISTOPHER.
THANKS TO THE MAN...
"... THE BOY -- ALL THAT I STRIVED FOR FOR SO LONG -- WILL BE MINE AGAIN!"

HOW..?
WHO --?! WHO COULD HIDE FROM MY...
AT LONG LAST, WE FINALLY MEET, STRIPLING... FACE TO FACE.
THE PLEASURE'S MINE, NO DOUBT.
Y-YOU --
-- IT CAN'T BE YOU --
MEMORIES ABRUPTLY FLOOD NATE'S MIND, LITERALLY, A TIDAL WAVE OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS RAGING OUT OF HIS CONTROL.
THE SUDDEN SIGHT OF THIS MAN SO LIKE THE MONSTER WHO SLAUGHTERED FORGE --
-- THE CLOSEST HE WOULD EVER KNOW TO FAMILY, TO A FRIEND, TO A FATHER --
-- SWEEPS HIM THROUGH A GLIMMER OF RECEPTION.
AN IMPORTANT REVELATION.
SINISTER --?
SINISTER CREATED ME?!
NATHAN...

KWOOM
AWAY FROM HIM Dr. DEMENTO -- NOW --
-- THE KID'S WITH X-FORCE!
CHOOM CHOOM

HARDLY A HURDLE, I DARESAY...
POOM


UNNF!
... TO ONE WHO HAS THE KNOWLEDGE --
-- AND ABILITY --
-- TO PREVENT YOU FROM ACCESSING YOUR MUTANT POWERS.
I DID NOT DEDICATE *MY LIFE* TO STUDYING GENETIC MUTATION FOR NAUGHT, MIND YOU.
IT'S ME YOU'RE AFTER, NOT THEM.
LEAVE THEM ALONE.
GREY..?
SUCH A MAGNIFICENT CULMINATION OF GENETIC PERFECTION. ALL I'VE EVER WANTED -- AND *WORKED* TOWARD -- EMBODIED IN ONE RAW, UNTRAINED BOY.
YOU NEED NOT FEAR ME.
THE UNEXPECTED *X-MAN* WHOSE ARRIVAL HERE IN THIS REALITY MAY HAVE *AWAKENED* THE VERY CONCEPT OF ONSLAUGHT --
W-WHAT..?
-- THE ONE WHO GAVE THE *PSI-BEAST PHYSICAL ACCESS* TO ITS ARMOR FOR THE FIRST TIME.
FORCIBLY PULLING XAVIER FROM THE ASTRAL PLANE... VIRTUALLY TEACHING HIM HOW --

SAVE IT, SINISTER!
YOU'RE A LIAR.
I COULD *NEVER* BELIEVE *ONE WORD* YOU SAY.
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU AND YOUR GENETIC GAMES, WHAT YOU DID TO *THRENODY* -- HOW YOU USED HER TO SPY ON MUTANTS AROUND THE GLOBE.
WE USED EACH *OTHER.*
I SAVED THE GIRL FROM HER OWN SAD SONG, *SUMMERSEED* --
-- FROM A POWER THAT WILL CONSUME HER WITHOUT ME. DO NOT *DOUBT THAT* FOR A *SINGLE MOMENT* --
YEAAR!
-- AND I WILL DO *EXACTLY* THE SAME FOR YOU...

WHA..?
IN THE WEEKS I'VE *STUDIED* YOU AND YOUR ABILITIES, NATHAN --
-- MET AND MAPPED YOUR MIND FAR MORE INTIMATELY THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY YET KNOW, IN FACT --
-- I LEARNED ALL ABOUT YOU.
N-NO...
THE INFINITE POTENTIAL...
...AT YOUR COMMAND...
...THE FULL PROMISE... OF THE MAN CALLED CABLE...
MINE... ONCE BEFORE...
MINE BY *RIGHT*.
UHNN...
...

CONTINUES IN X-FORCE 57 NEXT WEEK, THEN IN X-MAN 19!